

Message Text

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ACTION NEA-11

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
ICA-11 AID-05 IO-13 COME-00 EB-08 LAB-04 SIL-01
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R 111140Z MAY 78 ZDK
FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1543
INFO AMCONSUL BOMBAY
AMCONSUL CALCUTTA
AMEMBASSY COLOMBO
AMEMBASSY DACCA
AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU
AMCONSUL MADRAS
CINCPAC

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CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: /A
TAGS: PINT, IN
SUBJECT: JANATA SUBJECTED TO ITS FIRST NO-CONFIDENCE MOTION

1. ON MAY 10 THE TWO CONGRESS PARTIES MOVED MOTION
OF NO-CONFIDENCE IN THE JANATA GOVERNMENT IN THE LOK
SABHA. THIS IS THE FIRST TIME THAT THE JANATA HAS BEEN
SUBJECTED TO SUCH A MOTION. THE FIRST DAY OF DEBATE WAS
CHARACTERIZED BY LENGTHY EXCHANGES ALONG FAMILIAR LINES.
CONGRESS AND CONGRESS (I) MP'S CONCEDED THAT THEIR
MOTIONS WERE SURE TO FAIL BUT MAINTAINED THAT THEY WERE
DETERMINED TO USE THE OCCASION TO HIGHLIGHT THE "FAIL-
URES" OF THE GOVERNMENT. THEIR CHARGE SHEET INCLUDED:
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ATROCITIES ON JARIJANS, FAILURE TO REDEEM ITS
ELECTION PLEDGES, FAVORITISM TOWARD BIG BUSINESS
AND LANDED INTERESTS, INACTION REGARDING THE LAW
AND ORDER AND PRICE FRONTS, AND GENERAL INABILITY TO
GOVERN THE COUNTRY. LEADING OFF THE DEBATE, THE
CONGRESS (I)'S C.M. STEPHEN, THE LEADER OF THE OPPOSITION,
HIGHLIGHTED THE INTERNAL SQUABBLINGS WITHIN THE

RULING PARTY AND IMPLIED THAT MRS. GANDHI'S RECENT ELECTORAL SUCCESSES IN SEVERAL BY-ELECTIONS WAS A DIRECT REFLECTION OF THE PEOPLE'S LOSS OF FAITH IN THE GOVERNMENT.

2. JANATA MP'S VIGOROUSLY SOUGHT TO REFUTE THE OPPOSITION CHARGES AND DESCRIBED THE NO-CONFIDENCE MOTION AS A POLITICAL DEVICE RAISED BY THE CONGRESS (I) TO EXPLOIT ITS VICTORY IN THE AZAMGARH BY-ELECTION. THEY DEFENDED THE GOVERNMENT'S RESTORATION OF CIVIL LIBERTIES AND CHALLENGED THE CONGRESS BENCHES TO DEMONSTRATE THAT THEY HAD ACCOMPLISHED ANY GREAT ADVANCES DURING THEIR 30 YEARS OF RULE.

3. FOREIGN POLICY FIGURED ONLY PERIPHERALLY IN THE DEBATE. ONE OF STEPHEN'S CHARGES WAS THAT THE JANATA'S "GENUINE NON-ALIGNMENT POLICY ACTUALLY REPRESENTED A "TILT" TOWARD THE U.S. AND OTHER WESTERN COUNTRIES. IN RESPONSE, SEVERAL JANATA MP'S TOOK UP THE REFRAIN THAT INDIA'S RELATIONS WITH ITS NEIGHBORS HAD NEVER BEEN BETTER THAN AT PRESENT. ONE MP CITED THE PRIME MINISTER'S ADMANT REFUSAL TO SIGN THE NPT AS EVIDENCE OF THE GOI'S INDEPENDENT FOREIGN POLICY.

4. COMMENT: NO-CONFIDENCE MOTIONS WERE REGULAR FEATURES OF PARLIAMENTARY SESSIONS IN THE MID AND LATE 1960'S
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BUT HAVE BEEN RARELY INTRODUCED SINCE THEN. AS A VEHICLE TO DRAMATIZE DISSATISFACTION WITH THE GOVERNMENT OF THE DAY, THIS PARTICULAR NO-CONFIDENCE MOTION SEEMED LARGELY A NON-STARTER. THE DEBATE COVERED VERY FAMILIAR GROUND AND NEITHER SIDE HAD ANYTHING NEW TO OFFER. INDEED, THE OPPOSITION CHARGES AND STRONG REBUTTALS FROM THE GOVERNMENT BENCHES LARGELY SEEMED A REPLAY OF THE RHETORIC EMPLOYED DURING THE DEBATE ON THE OPPOSITIONS CENSURE MOTION AGAINST GOI HOME MINISTER CHARAN SINGH LAST AUGUST. EMBASSY OFFICERS WHO WERE PRESENTED NOTED THE LACKLUSTER NATURE OF THE EXCHANGES. THIS WAS REFLECTED IN THE PRESS GALLERIES, WHERE SEVERAL NOTED JOURNALISTS WERE SEEN DOZING.

5. THE DEBATE IS SCHEDULED TO END LATE MON MAY 11, WHEN THE PRIME MINISTER WILL RESPOND TO THE OPPOSITION CHARGES.
GOHEEN

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